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WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN**
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October 28, 2021

In re: Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. v. Bartley
1:15-cv-00784-JTN-ESC

Dear Parties,

I have been contacted by Judge Janet T. Neff who presided over the above-mentioned case.

Judge Neff informed me that it has been brought to her attention that while she presided over the case, she owned stock in Wells Fargo. Her ownership of stock neither affected nor impacted her decisions in this case. However, her stock ownership would have required recusal under the Code of Conduct for United States Judges, and thus, Judge Neff directed that I notify the parties of the conflict.

Advisory Opinion 71, from the Judicial Conference Codes of Conduct Committee, provides the following guidance for addressing disqualification that is not discovered until after a judge has participated in a case:

[A] judge should disclose to the parties the facts bearing on disqualification as soon as those facts are learned, even though that may occur after entry of the decision. The parties may then determine what relief they may seek, and a court (without the disqualified judge) will decide the legal consequence, if any, arising from the participation of the disqualified judge in the entered decision.

Although Advisory Opinion 71 contemplated disqualification after a Court of Appeals oral argument, the Committee explained “[s]imilar considerations would apply when a judgment was entered in a district court by a judge, and it is later learned that the judge was disqualified.”

With Advisory Opinion 71 in mind, you are invited to respond to Judge Neff’s disclosure of a conflict in this case. Should you wish to respond, please submit your response on or before November 29, 2021. Any response will be considered by another judge of this court without the participation of Judge Neff.

Sincerely,

Thomas L. Dorwin
Clerk of Court